

USDA Forest Service

San Bernardino National Forest

Mountaintop Ranger District



Date: October 18, 2004

San Bernardino National Forest
P.O. Box 290
Fawnskin, California 92333

For Immediate Release

Contacts:

Tricia Abbas (909) 382-2812

Battalion Chief David Kelly (909) 382-2772

Burning on the Mountaintop

The San Bernardino National Forest may begin burning brush and debris piles starting this week due to unseasonably wet and cool weather this October. If the wet weather continues as forecasted, burning could start as early as Tuesday, October 19th.

Mountaintop District Ranger Allison Stewart said, "The spring and summer provided a great opportunity for the Forest Service and other MAST agencies to remove hundreds of thousands of dead and dying trees. Many of the fuel reduction projects near mountain communities included thinning and stacking piles of dense brush to be burned in the wet season. Burning unnecessary fuel will further help protect nearby communities from wildfire. Rain and hopefully some snow have arrived and we're pleased to start burning some of the brush piles soon."

The primary area ready for pile burning is parts of the forest near the community of North Lake Arrowhead, northwest of the golf course along Tunnel 2 Ridge. Similar burning may occur if conditions are right on Bertha Peak, approximately 1 mile north of Big Bear Lake in the next week.

Firefighters are hoping to burn approximately 3000 to 5000 brush piles across the Mountaintop Ranger District this fall and winter. Burning of these brush piles need to occur in order to further reduce the threat of wildfire to mountain communities. Firefighters will remain on scene of burning piles as long as the piles have the potential to be active. If conditions change to make burning unfavorable or dangerous, burning will cease.

"Seeing smoke in the air is often a reason for concern to mountain residents including me," said Stewart. "We need to burn these piles this fall and winter to help reduce fuel-loading and the threat of wildfire to our precious communities and Forest over the years to come."

If citizens see smoke in the air in the general vicinity of North Lake Arrowhead or Bertha Peak in Big Bear and would like to find out what is happening, they are asked to call the San Bernardino National Forest Fire Information line at (909) 383-5688.

###